# THE FARMER'S FUTURE.

## An Open Letter from Erastus Wiman, of New York, to Valancey E. Fuller, Esq., Farmers' Institute Convention, Court House, Toronto, Ontario.

DEAR SIR:

A LETTER from you in the public prints of April 18, with several others from thinking farmers in various localities, indicates that the Convention of representatives of Farmers' Institutes, to be held in Toronto on the 28th inst., will possess more than ordinary interest. It appears to be universally admitted that some changes are absolutely essential to restore prosperity to the farming community of Canada. The object of the Convention is avowedly to discuss, and if possible discover, what remedies are available to relieve the depressed condition, and gloomy prospect of that numerous and most respectable class. It is doubtful if in all the world there is a community in whom the virtues of industry, frugality, or integrity are more marked, thereby entitling them to the highest measure of comfort and happiness. Yet it may be doubted if there is any class of the community in Canada whose hard labors are so poorly requited; whose economies accomplish so little in the shape of accumulations, or whose prospects are so uncertain. Thinking men who love their country, and who look below the surface, will see, in this condition, results most disastrous; for, if the farmer cannot prosper in Canada, there is no hope for Canada. The whole superstructure of her commerce, and her manufactures rest, upon his ability to consume and pay. If this ability is restricted, if it steadily declines rather than improves, it is time for farmers to assemble in convention to inquire for remedies. It is time for some other remedy to be discovered than that of borrowing money, or that which results from increased taxation. The perfection of the machinery for lending money in Canada is the boast of some of her shrewdest business men, and yet to some it is the saddest commentary on her condition. It is true that in the use of capital on reasonable terms, great advantages are to be gained, but is not the limit dangerously near where disaster lurks in the loan? When prosperity and good results are possible from the use of money, the money-lending machinery may be a beneficent agency; but when depressed and limited markets are encountered, when loss and accumulating interest impend, the very perfection of this machinery is the force that brings ruin. The amount of interest payable by the farmers of Canada to-day, in the aggregate is absolutely appalling in proportion to their possible profits; while the aggregate interest account, including the annual charges on the public debt, the municipal, mercantile, and private indebtedness, if footed up, would approach, in the sum remitted to Great Britain, one-half of the total value of the exports to that country. But it is not by loans alone that the Canadian farmer has been endeavoring to get rich. In the language of Goldwin Smith, he has been attempting to get rich by taxation—lifting himself by his boot straps, as it were. Just how far such a feat can be successful the present condition illustrates. Perhaps the numerous delegations that have waited upon the Finance Minister, at Ottawa, to increase the duties levied on various necessities of life may contribute to a solution of the unhappy condition of the average Canadian farmer. Certainly if a community *can* get rich by taxation, these gentlemen possess the remedy, for it follows that the greater the taxes the greater the riches.

But something more is needed. A remedy greater and more effective is essential for the Canadian farmer than that which is to be found in borrowing money or increasing taxation—something that will accomplish more than subsidizing railroads, building unnecessary canals, or spending money on cruisers to hunt down the shipping of a friendly power. What is most needed by the Canadian farmer to-day is a better price for his produce. What his necessities require is a larger market.

The movement contemplated by your Institutes toward improved drainage, the encouragement of breeding horses, and toward better fertilizers, is good and wise in its way. But, if beside this, a great and near-by market can be secured, if continuously better prices are possible, this, and this alone, will bring back prosperity to the Canadian farmer. It may well be asked, how can this great boon be achieved? I answer, it is within the grasp of Canada to-day. By a complete reciprocity with the United States, a market such as the world has never equalled, is open to every Canadian farmer. A wealthy and extravagant people are at her very borders, and badly need her products. They are willing and ready to pay liberally for them, and to friendly discussion of enlarged commercial relations between the two countries. Fears were entertained that by some injudicious seizure in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, some harsh or mistaken proceeding, the growing sentiment favorable to an amicable settlement of this vexed question would be turned into a feeling of indignation and hostility, resulting in retaliation, non-intercourse, and perhaps actual war. Under conditions of such suspense, and in the face of danger, come the proposals for settlement of the fishery question on the basis proposed by Lord Salisbury, whereby the right to fish in Canadian waters, and to buy supplies, is awarded on condition that Canadian fish are admitted to the United States free of duty. This proposal, if carried out, while it seems to yield important privileges, is one that is destined to accomplish results more beneficent than it has ever been the good fortune of any British minister to accomplish on this continent. Not only does it seem like a divine intervention, to settle at a most critical moment a question that was assuming a most serious shape, but it comes like a message of peace to the American people, yielding up to them valuable privileges, and inviting them to take the first step in the direction of free commercial intercourse, which they will not be slow to follow. For the settlement of the fishery question in this way does not necessarily close the discussion of enlarged international relations. On the contrary, this adjustment only opens it up, and in a manner that frees it from the only serious source of complication, so that with all the conditions favorable, already referred to as existing in this country, it seems not improbable, now that public attention has been directed to the question, that a very little effort would result in such action by Congress as would, so far as it is concerned, remove all barriers to the freest commercial intercourse with Canada. That this action could be helped forward by some expression from the Canadians themselves no one doubts; and it remains for Canadian farmers to insist that their representatives in Parliament should give this expression of wishes shape and form. In taking this step the farmers would vastly improve their prospects, and make a move toward increasing the value of every acre of land, and every article of produce they could grow.

All the advantages of an open market, with sixty millions of people, is within their grasp. All the advantages of contiguity, of excellent means of communication, of extreme prosperity among liberal buyers, without the payment of duty, without the sacrifice of a single political principle—all this within a year is possible to the Canadian farmer, if he chooses to exert his influence on his representative in Parliament at Ottawa. It need not be a party question. It is better that it should not be. Farmers may differ about religious matters, or on politics, or on modes of cultivation, but there can be no difference in opinion as to the benefits of a free and open market, with the most progressive and the wealthiest nation of the continent. There can be no difference of opinion as to the advantage resulting from an advance in prices of every bushel of barley, of every horse that is for sale over the border, for every lamb that bleats, for every chicken, or even for every dozen eggs that the farmer's wife gathers—and last year the United States received from Canada fourteen million dozen of eggs! This is a question of economics, not of politics, and hence, can be discussed in farmers' institutes with perfect propriety. But it is the duty of politicians of all shades to examine it, and it is within the power of politicians of both parties to promote it. The farmer certainly, whose interests above all others should be watched, and by every means promoted, has the right to demand that his representative should investigate the subject, that he sould not be bound down by party lines on a matter of such moment, and that he should vote for such measures or resolutions as would indicate to the United States the wishes of his constituents. If the farmers will let their wishes be known to their members by letters and petitions, on even postal cards, their voice will be potent. Few men at Ottawa will fail to heed the expression of a unanimous sentiment for a larger market and better prices, if urged upon them by anything like a united and hearty movement of their constituents.

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A Reciprocity Treaty, such as existed from 1854 to 1867 (under which Canadian farmers prospered as they never prospered before or since), is an impossibility. Americans feel that it was one-sided and unfair to them; and such a partial and temporary remedy is now clearly out of the question. But that it is possible to pass an Act contemplating the more comprehensive measure, whereby there will be secured a permanent and complete commercial union between the two great English speaking nations of the North, no one here doubts who watches the signs of the times. Its very comprehensiveness makes it attractive. The possibilities of an extension of the trade of the United States into the unknown regions of the North, the advantages that would result from the free introduction of the great agricultural, mineral and other resources of the Dominion, together with the prospect of settling, once for all, the various international differences that continually arise: these considerations help forward a favorable conclusion. The financial condition of the United States, her vast surplus, the necessity of reduction in her tariff revenues, are also important factors, while the peculiar relation of political parties, one to the other, on this question, make the time an opportune one for the passage of an Act favorable to Commercial Union with Canada.

It has all along been felt by Canadian residents here, who closely felt the pulse of public sentiment, that if only the fishery question could approach even a temporary adjustment, during this Spring, the best results would follow, in the shape of a great opportunity exists for vastly improving her wealthiest nation on the continent. There can be no difference of opinion as to the advantage resulting from an advance in prices of every bushel of barley, of every horse that is for sale over the border, for every lamb that bleats, for every chicken, or even for every dozen eggs that the farmer's wife gathers—and last year the United States received from Canada fourteen million dozen of eggs! This is a question of economics, not of politics, and hence, can be discussed in farmers' institutes with perfect propriety. But it is the duty of politicians of all shades to examine it, and it is within the power of politicians of both parties to promote it. The farmer certainly, whose interests above all others should be watched, and by every means promoted, has the right to demand that his representative should investigate the subject, that he sould not be bound down by party lines on a matter of such moment, and that he should vote for such measures or resolutions as would indicate to the United States the wishes of his constituents. If the farmers will let their wishes be known to their members by letters and petitions, on even postal cards, their voice will be potent. Few men at Ottawa will fail to heed the expression of a unanimous sentiment for a larger market and better prices, if urged upon them by anything like a united and hearty movement of their constituents.

There are not a few who think that the present moment is the most important one for the future of Canada that has yet occurred in her history. A great opportunity exists for vastly improving her prospects by a commercial alliance with a neighboring nation. By this alliance, and still remaining a British Colony, and working out in her own way the problem of self-government, she can be independent of all the evils that beset a republic, and yet, by this commercial bargain, our native country can have all the untold advantages of vast markets; share in the wealth of the most money-making and most progressive people in the world; compete in manufactures at all points, with the advantages of great natural products, abundant water powers and a frugal and industrious population. By this means and by this alone, can the world be taught that Canada can hold her own in a free market with the products of her farms, of her fisheries, or of her factories: it remains with the farmers of Canada to see that this chance is afforded her.

I trust you, and other farmers who may read this letter, will pardon the presumption which prompts it, but situated as I am, with common interests, with a knowledge of the common welfare of the two countries, and, as I grow older, with my thoughts and affections turning to my native land, I cannot resist the temptation to point out what I conceive to be the path that leads to her prosperity. Communities here, without one-half the natural advantages which Canada possesses, are in the highest degree prosperous. The mortgage indebtedness in whole States has been enormously reduced, if not entirely liquidated; where ten years ago the interest account from the West to the East was a heavy burden, there are now numerous farmers in the West who seek investment in the East. Local and governmental indebtedness is being rapidly reduced; great projects carried forward within the means of each locality, and without borrowing a dollar, and a general condition of hopefulness and material strength unequalled elsewhere in the world. These are not from any difference in form of government, or any advantages from political organic policy, except and save the one that, as between the varied commonwealths of the Union there are no commercial barriers. The activities of the one help to build up, support, and make prosperous the activities of the other. Canada, self-reliant, self-poised by a commercial union, can be made the equal, if not greater than any of these great commonwealths, and thereby possessed of a greater prosperity than ever entered the heart of man to conceive. Thus, while under existing conditions her vast natural resources and geographical advantages are restricted, and from present indications yield her but a partial and meagre prosperity at best, she could at one bound become the most envied of all nations in the world. She might then become the most prosperous and the most contented, as she is even now the richest country in the world, though the want of development renders her liable to the reproach that she is one of the poorest.

I venture to address this letter to you, sir, because of the worthy position which you occupy, and the public spirit that you have evinced in the promotion of the agricultural interests of your native land, and because of your well-known liberality and activity in promoting everything that advances the good of your fellow countrymen.

Faithfully yours,

ERASTUS WIMAN.

NEW YORK, April 26, 1887.